

Q: Today is June 7th, 2008. My name is Dorothea Black and I am here at Newton Town Hall with Jean Flanagan. Together we are participating in the Newton Talks Oral History Project that's being conducted with the Newton Free Library, Historic Newton, and the Newton Senior Center. Can you tell us about your connection to Newton?

A: Well, I was born here, went to all the schools--the public schools--lived here for about 21 years and then got married and moved away from the city. And I came back about 8 years ago, maybe? Moved into my in-laws' because they were ailing, and then they died and then we sold the house and moved out. But we stayed in Newton because that being our hometown we figured, you know--we actually were forced into downsizing from our house in Natick during the recession and we moved into an apartment in Newton. But I wanted to come back to my hometown, I missed it.

Q: What village of Newton do you live in?

A: I grew up in West Newton, but I live in Newtonville now. And I think I like Newtonville a little better because there's more -- [00:16] more to do in Newtonville.

Q: Yeah, yeah. So we're here today to talk about your experience when a family member was serving with the military away from home, so could you tell us about who this was and what your relationship was with them, or him?

A: Okay, my brother Richard served in Vietnam from '71 to the beginning of 1972. At the time I was dating a guy who had been drafted and was just waiting to be called, so I had two people that I was concerned about at the same time.

Q: And this fellow you were dating, you later married him?

A: Yes, yes and I'm still married to him.

Q: And what's his name?

A: His name is John Flanagan.

Q: So John and then Richard, your brother--did you always call him Richard?

A: I called him Richie. After I had children he was Uncle Richie, so his real name is Richard but we started calling him Richie. So that was really--and it's, you know, today that's what he's known as, Richie, we call him that.

Q: So when Richard--did he join or was he--he was drafted.

A: No, he was drafted. He had been to Newton Junior College and he was working. He didn't know if he wanted to progress further with his studies, but he was employed. And again, he got a low lottery number when they were choosing the numbers and that was that. The family--of course we were a little disturbed and disappointed but we figured let's just take one step at a time, see what happens.

Q: And so would--this was the army?

A: The army, yes. Both were in the army. Correct.

Q: And how old was first Richard when he was drafted?

A: He was about--let me see, about 20--at least two and a half years older than me--so he was about 21 maybe? My husband went over when he was just 19 or 20, so he was about 21.

Q: And you were both living at home when this happened?

A: Yes. At that time, yeah, we were both living at home.

Q: And so your feelings about it at the time when you heard the news, were--

A: Right, I was very angry, because not only was my brother going to be shipped off, but my boyfriend. We had a very serious relationship, so it was, you know, twice as bad as it might've been if it were just my brother or my boyfriend. But it was both of them, so we felt cheated, we felt really angry.

Q: And your boyfriend was--he eventually got a draft notice and this was after your brother?

A: I'm trying to think, because I know my husband now came home a couple of months before my brother did in November of '71, and my brother came home in January of '72. So I think my husband was--at the time my boyfriend--was taken first.

Q: But very close to the same time.

A: It was very close, yeah, it was only a matter of a couple of months between their being drafted and coming home.

Q: And where did they go for training?

A: My brother went to a couple of places--Ayer, Fort Devens in Ayer I believe, and then he was somewhere in Texas. I can't think of the name of the base, but my--John was only at Fort Dix in Jersey.

Q: And when you heard the news that they were actually going--they both went over to Vietnam, is that right?

A: Right. My husb--[05:04] if it's easier for me to just say husband, because he's my husband now--

Q: Yes. Yes.

A: My husband-to-be--he was sent over in April of--gosh, April of '70, that sounds about right. No, that was the basic training. Basic training went for--it must have been the end of--it was the end of '70--November of '70 that he actually went over to Vietnam.

Q: And where in Vietnam was he stationed?

A: He was in rather a--if you can call it a nice place, Cam Ranh Bay, where there wasn't any real active fighting going on. But there were dangers that were always present, but not quite as...

Q: And obviously you must have been worried.

A: Yes, I was, because I'm an avid reader and newspaper reader and television news reader, which, you know, sometimes can be a good thing or a bad thing, but for me it just was compulsion. I had to watch. I know my parents didn't like to open the paper in the morning. They'd get it and they--I'd say, "Why isn't the paper open, what's the matter?" And there'd been news like the night before that some place had been bombed near where my brother was. He was in a pretty bad area. He was in the northern part of the South Vietnam. It was called Phu Bai, I believe, and he was a medic. It was really a lot harder on him, I think. I think his memories are kind of closed off because he had such horrific memories of being, you know, more or less in

more active of a position than my husband. My husband drove a jeep and pulled guard duty on a boat.

Q: And your brother saw active duty?

A: Yeah. He was in a, you know, a Jeep that would go find bodies and, you know, they had to go through landmines and everything. And he saw a lot of horror, which he never really talked about, so I think it did obviously affect him.

Q: Did you communicate during this time with both of them? Were you in touch?

A: Oh yes, yes, actively. I mean--through my parents actually. I probably wrote maybe one or two letters to my brother, but my parents would always write and I'd always add a little P.S. on the bottom of those letters. But I think my heart was with my husband to be. I was very--even though he was in the safer place, we just--you know, the relationship hadn't gone on for too long, but we knew that it was, you know, a pretty serious thing. So all that was in my mind all the time was, "Is he going to come home? Is he really telling the truth? Is he in a safer place than, you know, maybe some of his friends who had joined the Marines?" Obviously they were in areas that saw a lot of bloodshed.

Q: So letters went back and forth, and how frequently would you say you--

A: Yes. I know I wrote to John very frequently. I had stacks of those airmail envelopes.

Q: How long did it take a letter to--

A: Well, you had to address them to this post office in San Francisco. I remember, it was 97th Transportation Company, Heavy Boat 9-0-0...something...the zip--

Q: You must have written a lot of letters!

A: That's how I know--my husband doesn't remember--often doesn't remember and has never really remembered his social security number without looking. I know his social security number. He has asked me a dozen--dozens of times for mine and I said, "Well, don't feel bad. It's simply because I had to address your letters with your social security." I had to do lots of things that involved knowing his social security number, so I remember it, just engraved into my brain.

Q: Yeah. What kinds of news did you tell him, and did he tell you?

A: Well, I was careful not to tell him anything that might upset him, because I was home with my girlfriends and I was going out, but not really "going out." I was just, you know, hanging out with them and they were all single. One by one they were getting married. I was in weddings while he was over there and he worried about me meeting someone else. I had, you know, some friends that were guy friends and simply--realistically, it was just platonic because I was in love with my guy. But I was going crazy with the boredom because we'd been going out every night when he was home--like I was having difficulty getting up for work because we were staying out really late. I think it was partially because we weren't sure what was going to be down the road, and we wanted to get all the time in that we could together because the future was so unknown, actually.

Q: And your plans all got suspended, for--

A: Right, they did. It was really horrible because I remember my--the day my husband left for Fort Dix was the day of his father's birthday. And his parents and I all went to the airport together to see him off, and I think his father was--had a little tear in his eye which, you know, I expected, because I certainly did. But it was a very difficult time--not only just the knowledge

that he was going to be in training to go to Vietnam but the fact that he was going to be away from me. But his mother--bless her, bless her heart--she paid the--I think it was \$20 to fly Eastern back to Boston on weekends when he had off. They gave him a lot of off time, which was great. And he'd come--she'd pay for the ticket and he'd come home and spend all of the time with me, and I felt really bad because I know as a mom I would want--the relationship I have with my son, I'd want him to be with me all the time. But we spent a lot of time at his family home and when it was time for them to drive--I didn't have my license then, so they drove him into the airport. We all went together and his mother would yell out the door--we would be sitting in the yard--"tea time!" And that meant tea and then that meant going into the airport and leaving again for--it wasn't every weekend but it was several weekends out of his time there that he would manage to get off and come home.

Q: That's great. So when he was in training you saw him, but no more when he--

A: Right, right. But he did get a break when he was in Vietnam. Went in November, the following May he came home for my close friend's wedding that I was in and he decided that he wasn't sure if he wanted to go back. I said, "Well, what happens if you don't go back?" Because I was thinking it would be great if he didn't go back, or if he could not go back and have some kind of medical reason. A bit too late, you know, to say why you weren't able to go back, but I was secretly very concerned that he really was serious and that he would not go back on the designated date. But as fate would have it, he just couldn't bring himself--the hour of his departure actually from being driven from his home into the airport he said "I want to talk to you." And we went down the street to Newton Corner, which is still pretty much the same as it was then, the part where--well actually where Hubbard's Drug Store is. Anyone from Newton might remember Hubbard's. And we got on the bus and went to New Hampshire to his sister's house. I was really nervous. I was happy that he was still with me, but I was thinking in the back my mind, was "My god, what have we done? What's going to happen?" Never mind not telling our parents. I mean, we were of age, but we were still--we were young, I was 20, he was 20 or

21, a little older than me. And we stayed--we got off the bus, hitchhiked a ride to his sister's. I remember that vividly because I think of, you know, like now--I actually hitchhiked back then! And his sister was like "What are you doing here? Aren't you supposed to be going back?" And he goes "Don't tell anyone, don't tell anyone. I just need a little more time to think about it." So as it turned out somehow his brother, who'd been a Marine--joined the Marines, he never got along with him really that well, eight years difference--found out, came up, got into a huge fight with him, ended up breaking a chair. I don't know--I was gone, because my sister-in-law's husband said "Let's go back to Newton. I'm gonna take you back to Newton." I didn't want to go but he said "It's the best, you have to face this. Your parents are worried sick." So I found out that my brother-in-law had tried to knock my husband--well, my husband-to-be--unconscious.

Q: These were very tumultuous times to be a young person.

A: Yeah, well because he was a Marine and that was it, you know, he was a bad dude. And they never really got along, because he had finished school early so he could go into the Marines and he wasn't involved in the war because he was eight years older. He wasn't involved in the Vietnam War, my brother-in-law.

Q: What would be the consequences of somebody not returning from leave?

A: Well, I forget what the disciplinary consequences were, because there were some--it was only about a week. But he got an honorable discharge, I know that, but I really can't remember. It couldn't have been too severe. I know there was some punishment.

Q: So he ended up going back and there were some consequences.

A: Yeah, they added time to his time to be served. There was nothing really major, you know, that was--

Q: But it shows that he was having a hard time being away from family and his life and--

A: Yeah, but they managed over there. I mean at least where he was it wasn't too bad of an area. It was surrounded of course by jungle and beach.

Q: So how long was he away altogether?

A: Altogether he was away from April of '70 to mid-November of '71.

Q: And when he came back--do you remember the day when he returned for good?

A: Yeah. I remember because I was at home and I had lost my job, so I was sleeping in. And there's a knock on the door, I think my parents answered it, and they told me to come down, someone was here. And I came downstairs and there he was dressed in civilian clothes--he'd been home first. And to this day he says to me "You didn't seem very happy to see me, you just said 'Oh, hi.'" I go "I was half asleep. I thought I was dreaming, you know, and I couldn't believe that you had been discharged." Actually he was discharged a little early, it wasn't the full two years he served. He was supposed to go to a post in Alabama, I think, when he got home. But for some reason that was dropped and he didn't have to go.

Q: Was it a surprise then that he was released?

A: Yes, it was. We found out pretty quickly that he was--that was it, he was home for good.

Q: Wow. And what was his adjustment like after returning home from Vietnam?

A: Well, there were issues over there when he was serving that just--mostly out of boredom, because they weren't really involved in active fighting--so they all did drugs of every description, and he came home with a habit. I, being very naive and young, didn't realize, you know, what was going on. Some of his behaviors were, in retrospect, a bit bizarre or, you know, hard to figure out. And he opened up about it later on that he was indeed, you know, into drugs when he was over there and he had a hard time adjusting when he came back.

Q: Did he--people--you're right, people didn't discuss that much in those days. Did he get any help with the--about the drugs?

A: VA wasn't much help. To this day they are not as helpful as they could be. I know he saw doctors, but his mother was adamant about him not going to the VA, because--maybe experience with her husband who'd been in World War Two or whatever. But she was adamant that--when he came home he had to have surgery for a gallbladder and she was adamant about him not going to the VA hospital, but going to the local hospital, which was Newton-Wellesley. And she wrote letters to the Congressmen and this one and that one and said "My son is sick, I believe he was made ill from the--" She blamed it on food over there, because he told her everything is fried in deep fat and they use it over and over again. And he had attacks of the pain that signified he had a gallbladder problem over there, but they didn't diagnose him or weren't able to. So when he got home and went to the doctor with the continued bouts of horrific pain--"Yup, you've got gallstones and you've gotta have your gallbladder out." So she did all her research and got him to get--you know, have a good surgeon and go to the hospital. That was a choice.

Q: Sounds like a rough reentry in a lot of ways.

A: Yeah. Because it wasn't that long--it was, I think it was January--he was home in November, and I think January he had to go in and have the surgery.

Q: Did he have many friends who served in Vietnam?

A: He had three friends who went into the Marines. They just volunteered, they went on their own desire to go, I guess. Maybe they felt it was better to go in than to be drafted, because they went in before he did. But of his close friends, no, none of them. They all had--even the ones that were not in college or who had finished college and were just looking for jobs--even they did not have to serve because of that lottery system, which in essence, I guess, is fair. Because who could you get that would say "Hey I want to go serve, I want to go to Vietnam." I mean not like today-- the wars that we've had in the past 10, 15 years, you know, people voluntarily went because they felt it was for a good cause. But most people in those days felt that it was literally a losing battle, and it was. And I'm angry that I lost time with him and that he went through, you know, what he went through, which wasn't really too tough, or as tough as it could be compared to others. And I'm not trying to minimize sacrifices that were made over there, but just that we did not believe in the war. We went to anti-war demonstrations in town, in Cambridge, and it was like "What the heck? This isn't right, this isn't fair. It should be protested. Can you get a doctor's letter?" I mean, nobody wanted to go and a lot of people lucked out, that they did get letters from the doctor, or they knew someone. But that wasn't to be for him or my brother, they--

Q: So you said earlier that you read a lot and you were informed. How much did you know about Vietnam the country when he went over there?

A: Well, the funny thing is when I was around nine or ten years old I had a subscription to this--I think it was related to National Geographic--they were little booklets that came every month of all the countries in the world and they included Vietnam. Which I don't know if it was...I don't know if back then it was even called Vietnam. Oh, it was called Indochina, that's right. Because I was only about nine or ten years old when I got these booklets. And they had the pictures in the middle with the glue that you could put on the different pages and it was fascinating to me. But,

you know, it didn't really mean that much to me, that particular part of the world because, you know, I was young at that age. I didn't really know.

Q: But then you remembered it, when--

A: Then I remembered. I said "My God, I read about this place." But it wasn't Vietnam--North and South Vietnam--it was--the whole place was called Indochina.

Q: But you maybe had a little bit of a picture of where he was, what it was like.

A: Yeah, and he of course would describe vividly his surroundings, so I felt like I was there, you know, I could--he was talking about cockroaches as big as cats coming through his tents or whatever, and weird lizards, and he said it was very strange. He said "But it somehow, you know, we found it to be entertaining," because it would get so boring sometimes that it was actually fun when you'd see lizards skittering from the edge of the jungle on to the land. He wasn't so cool on the cockroaches though. He said they were big.

Q: And the conflict--so you knew right--from the time before he went what it was about and you didn't--

A: Oh yes, yes, because we had been, you know, following the news regularly and attending the presidential election in '68. I forget...I'm trying to remember--I think it was Eugene McCarthy in the primaries. They had a big rally in Fenway Park that we went to and--anything that we could go to and make our voice heard, and even a crowd, we would go to--that had to do with protesting the war, because we, you know, had this feeling deep inside that, you know, it could be--may not be--but it could very well happen to you. So we were dead set against it right from the outcome, right from first hearing about it.

Q: Did his friends who signed up, were they--did they have different views or did they sign up just because they thought it was inevitable?

A: I think [22:42] both. They figured it was better to sign up than to be drafted and they just liked the thrill. They were talked into the--by the recruiters--the thrill of being a Marine, you know, the few, the proud, the Marines. And these were guys that were really bad. They wanted to serve. I really think maybe their political beliefs were a bit different from ours.

Q: There was a lot of controversy.

A: They didn't seem to have as much fear or trepidation about signing up and going over there.

Q: Yeah, interesting. Yeah. There were lots of different opinions and things going on in those days.

A: Right, right. There were. There really were.

Q: Now Richard, meanwhile, he had a tough time when he was over there it sounds like.

A: Right, I mean he came out okay. I mean he was never injured or anything, but the trauma, the emotional trauma of seeing what he saw--and we could only draw some conclusions from the little that he told us.

Q: When he wrote to your parents what kinds of news would he include, do you know?

A: Well, it was all more or less on the positive side because I think it was so bad sometimes he didn't want to frighten my parents, especially my father, because he was older and he worried about them. So he would only gloss over the bad things.

Q: And how long was he in Vietnam?

A: He was there approximately the same amount of time. My husband came home in November of '71 and my brother came home in January of '72. So that's two months. And I think he went in a tiny bit later than my husband.

Q: So they arrived home pretty close to each other?

A: Yeah, yeah. So they served pretty much--not quite two years, concluding the basic training.

Q: And how was your brother's adjustment to being out of the service?

A: Well, he seemed to just put it behind him. Almost like he didn't want to think about it. He got a job in the medical department of Waltham Hospital, almost--well, shortly after he came back. And then he worked for many years at Waltham Hospital and then when it closed he worked at Newton-Wellesley as--I can't think of the department. They handled the surgical instruments--Central Supply. Because he had had that experience, you know, being in the military and being exposed to that sort of thing, because they had to obviously sew up people on the battlefield or take out bullets or whatever they had to do. It was--it seemed fitting for him and he thought it would be good career. He was still there up until last year, but he had a stroke and he is now in a nursing home. So that was kind of a rough landing.

Q: Yeah. And did he ever talk about his experiences over there at any point?

A: I think he discussed them with my husband John, because they had both been over there and had the experience. Because again, I don't think many of his friends served, maybe one or two, but they were at different times. So I think he--and he's kind of a quiet guy, kind of private, so

he--I believe he did talk to John about his experiences over there. Maybe they compared a little bit. John felt guilty because he seemed so easy compared to being, you know, stuck in a jeep going through jungle and looking for, you know, dead bodies or fearing for your life--at any moment your jeep would explode something. But he almost tried to will it out of his mind I think, because--I didn't often ask him and the times I did ask him he was kind of reluctant to tell me. So I said "Gee, maybe he really feels this and he just doesn't want to speak of it, he wants to say goodbye to it forever."

Q: Yeah. Yeah. How did Newton as a community greet these returning soldiers? Do have any memory--

A: I don't remember any kind of warm welcome back. I mean there were no parades or anything. We talk about that to this day, that, you know, returning soldiers didn't get much of anything. I think they gave you a \$300 bonus and that was it. And he doesn't remember many people coming up to him and saying like they do now, "Thank you for your service." And after all these years of, you know, hating the fact that he went there and hating the president that forced him to go there, he ordered a Vietnam veterans hat not long ago. I said "Gee, that's so not like you." And he said "Well, I just thought at this point in life, you know, maybe I should get some recognition." And people at the parade--a couple people did come up to him and speak to him. One was a Vietnam veteran and they discussed different aspects of their service. So I said "Well see, that was good. They got you talking and you need to talk about it." So that was a plus. I thought that was nice. And it wasn't a bad looking hat. It was okay.

Q: Did their feelings about the military change at all during their time of service from how they felt going in, to how they felt about their experience in the army?

A: Well I know my--John--exactly how he felt. He hated it, he was resentful, he was angry, he hated the president at the time. And every conflict since then he has just--his anger has peaked,

because he thinks war is not the way to resolve conflict, as a lot of people believe. He felt it was, you know--not to demean those poor guys that went over there and--seeing films of it--he likes to watch films on TV of it. Possibly because he wasn't involved in that heavy fighting aspect. But his cousin died on the field. He was only 18, and that was very disturbing to him. But he likes to look at it and sometimes we watch them together.

Q: And your brother, does he have similar views?

A: I'm just thinking that he would just want to get it over with. He felt "This is it, I got my number, I've got to go over, I'll do it, do the best I can, get home, forget about it. Put it all in a little box." Because he did very little talking about the experience.

Q: So he didn't express much love or hate for the military, it was just something he had to get through.

A: More or less, yes. Although he--now, you know, in recent years had spoken that he, you know--it's not for him. He's not very militarily inclined. He doesn't speak very highly of them at all.

Q: Yeah. Yeah. Do you think either of them feels proud to have served at this point?

A: No, I don't think so. With everything that's gone on since then, I don't think they feel proud. I don't think there was any pride in serving a country whose president, you know, was instrumental in getting us further and deeper into the war, a needless war. I don't think they feel proud. They just felt it was either that or get punished--I don't know what they would have done, go to jail? Didn't think of going to Canada. But he just said "I'll just get it out of way and do it." But he doesn't really have that much respect for the military organization as a whole.

Q: When you hear about families with loved ones who are serving away from home, does this make you remember and have feelings about your experience? Is there anything that you would talk to them about if you could or advise them?

A: Well, I know the family's probably suffering loneliness and missing their loved ones who have served. But these men elected to serve in these wars, these conflicts in the last 15 years or so--I can't even remember when the first one began, after 9/11, I guess. All I know is this mindset that we have to go after them, they're trying to destroy our way of life, they're jealous of us, we have to go after them. But unfortunately we went after the wrong people and that's why so many people remain angry to this day. And it's still going on, so...

Q: So your experience with war has been all very discouraged.

A: Yeah, I would say negative. That--there was a sign in the doctor's office--this was when the war was still going on and I had married my husband--and there was this picture of a little child and I remember it really stuck with me because it said "War is not healthy for children and other living things." And I think that was a very common poster in those days. It was just--and there was the poster with the little girl taking the--actually it was a television commercial--taking the petals off the flower and then the big bomb going off behind her. So...it's just an ugly thing. It's a reality that war is never going to go away, but it doesn't mean you have to agree with the people that, you know, think it's the only way to solve the problems.

Q: So you and your husband married and in some ways he put it behind him also, and you were able to get on with life.

A: Yes, more or less, once he kind of kicked the drug habit.

Q: That's no small thing.

A: He'd smoked a lot of marijuana, of course. I mean they all did, and some of them did harder drugs. He didn't--he never really got into any hard stuff, but he did admit that he had had some experience with different types of drugs over there, and he said "That's the only way we got through it, that's the only way we got through it." Because sometimes it was frightening, like an ammo dump just down the road from them blew up. He said it sounded like a thousand fireworks and when I read it in the paper the next day I said "Oh my god the war is coming more southerly towards him" and then that's all I could think about. That was just a fluke. Fortunately it didn't happen again, so that was some relief there.

Q: Now apart from his mother's influence is he involved with the VA now? Does he--

A: He only goes to the VA for his medical care. He's not really involved with the VA or the American Legion, I mean those types of organizations.

Q: Well, yeah, but I mean the medical care that he's receiving from the VA--it sounds like you don't have a very high opinion of that.

A: Well I think it's--it can be good. He's had some good--he had a doctor from Dana Farber who visits the hospital every, maybe once a month or something. He had a condition that they thought should be looked into and as it turned out it was a condition that was something that could be attached to exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam. It is a condition that can progress to a more serious stage and he has been seeing this doc during a regular basis, who's wonderful, who's very competent. I mean, compared to some of the doctors in there, he's like one of the best I understand. My husband's not too happy with his experience with his primary care doctor they assigned him he's had for years and he's not been happy with her and yet every time he fills out a form to change, sends it in, he never hears back. And he keeps right up, keeps on them, but nothing changes. Figure he's in Framingham which is the satellite office of the VA, and it's small

and there are only two doctors and he's asked to be switched to the other doctor but they say "Fill out the form!" and nothing comes of it, so--

Q: Did your brother have any lasting effects like this Agent Orange thing from his time in Vietnam that you know of?

A: No. I don't believe he did. I mean, he had a stroke, but I think it was--might have been related to drinking. Turns out we found out he drank quite a lot and he drank over there and he drank and drank and drank when he got home. But he--other than that, he didn't have any physical symptoms that, you know, may have been brought to light from having been over in Vietnam.

Q: Yeah. Are there--I think that we're getting a little close to the end of our time. Are there any other things about that time in history, or that conflict, or what it was like with those people who were so close to you in such a dangerous place--any other things that you would like people to know about, you know, a hundred years from now?

A: Well, I felt it was a needless war, but some people felt it was necessary. And I feel terrible when I think of the lives that were lost. I went to the Vietnam Wall and my husband made a tracing of his cousin's name on the wall. And it really touches your heart, because these kids, when you see their faces and film on TV they're just young, beautiful--young kids were dragged over into a war that wasn't of their making. The ones who started it should have fought it. They shouldn't have sent these innocent kids over to fight a losing battle and for an unjust cause. And so to this day, that's how I feel about war. Unless somebody's attacking me on my own land, then I'm all for staying out. Stay away. NYOB.

Q: And do you know of very many other Vietnam War veterans in Newton?

A: Not really. Just actually this one person my husband met recently at the parade. His friends who did serve, one of them passed away, one of them moved away, and I don't know what happened--oh, one of them died actually. So he doesn't really have any friends--he has friends he served with, one that he was keeping in touch with that lives in Washington DC area, that was with him over there, and they correspond and we visited with them. But it's slowing down a little because they're getting older, but they still correspond, you know.

Q: But there were people he met there that he kept in touch with.

A: Yes. This one particular guy who was very much like him--he was there because he had to be. All they did was, you know, swear and curse about their circumstances. But they got along well and they did keep up their friendship after leaving the military, which was nice, because he's a nice guy. I liked him and his family. Met his wife and kids and it was nice. It was nice talking about it with someone else, sharing it with someone else who had been there.

Q: Well thank you. This was--it was so good of you to share these experiences--not all of them very happy, but very important--from the past. So thank you very much.

A: Well thank you. It was my pleasure. You know, I still think about it, but it was something in the period of time, in history that most of us won't forget, most of us who, you know, were directly connected to it. But it's over and let's hope there's never another.

Q: It's important for people to know about this.

A: Right, exactly. Exactly.

END OF INTERVIEW